



Puerto Rico Amateur Radio League, Inc.

An A.R.R.L. Special Service Club
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**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC 20554**

In the Matter of

1998 Biennial Review
Amendment of Part 97 of the
Commission's Amateur
Service Rules

WT Docket 98-143
RM-9148
RM-9150
RM-9196

To: The Federal Communications Commission:

COMMENTS OF: The Puerto Rico Amateur Radio League, Inc.

I. INTRODUCTION -

I, Victor Madera-KP4PQ, on behalf of the Puerto Rico Amateur Radio League, Inc. file these comments on November 16th, 1998 on the FCC's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, WT Docket No. 98-143.

The Puerto Rico Amateur Radio League, Inc. is a non-profit organization composed of radio amateurs dedicated to serve and honor amateur radio. The PRARL represents a large number of amateurs residing in Puerto Rico and other countries. Our main interest is to promote and maintain the Amateur Radio Service. For the past 14 years we have taught special courses to properly prepare candidates to obtain an FCC license.

"TO SERVE AND HONOR AMATEUR RADIO"

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We also have promoted and coordinated monthly testing sessions in Puerto Rico since the introduction of the VEC program. The writer is a licensed amateur since 1951.

Our comments are based on the fact that Amateur Radio is not a business; it is a voluntary service offered by professional radio operators without pecuniary interests. Amateur Radio has proven to be a National Resource for our country and therefore rulemaking decisions should be valued under these circumstances and not under the normal business or industrial environment.

As an example and in order to clarify our position, the reduction or removal of knowledge of the Morse code should not be based on whether or not the use of telegraphy is decreasing in modern commercial communications. Telegraphy is the root of communications and amateur radio operators are proud of it, and by a great majority want to maintain it as part of the requirements in obtaining a license. What would the reaction of Americans be if some one proposes to remove the arrows from the eagle's claws in our Nation's shield replacing it with a modern missile for the simple reason that arrows are obsolete?

II. NUMBER OF AMATEUR SERVICE LICENSE CLASSES -

The present six licenses are not necessary. It is a burden to the Commission and generates excessive paperwork resulting in a meaningless assignment of privileges. We do not believe that the fact that VECs will work more or less is a valid reason for changing. VEs are volunteers and are willing to work in order to maintain a fair, reliable and honest testing system. The changes should be considered in the light of fairness and standardization. The present six licenses are precisely the result of "patching the system"; a repetition of this mistake should be avoided.

The present license class identifications in use were based on the reason why the various classes were created: the "Technician" for those who wanted to repair and test transmitters but had no interest in amateur radio as such, the "Amateur Extra" for those who received the "extra" band privileges, etc. These names may have a meaning to US amateurs but to the outside world they mean nothing. License type should have a meaningful name; a generic name would be even better. In fact, Amateur Radio licenses in the early years were known as "A", "B" or "C" licenses. Changes for the convenience of commercial interests should not be considered.

We propose three (3) types of licenses.

Class "C" license-

Equivalent to the "Technician" license we now have.

Requirements: 50 written questions from the present question pools "2"

(Revised) and "3(A)".

No telegraphy requirements. Same privileges.

Class "B" license-

Equivalent to a combination of the "General" and "Advanced" license we now have.

Requirements: 50 written questions from the present question pools "3(B)" and "4(A)".

Telegraphy: A new 10 words per minute test similar to the present "General Class Code Test".

Class "A" license-

A license to replace the "Advanced" and "Amateur Extra" licenses that we now have.

Requirements: 80 written questions from the present question pool "4(A)"

Telegraphy: A new 15 words per minute similar to the existing "Amateur Extra Code Test".

III. DISTRIBUTION OF VE REQUIREMENTS-

With the proposed license changes, the following VE distribution is proposed:

1. "Amateur Extra" or "Class A" (VEs) licensees will be authorized to test all candidates requesting an "A", "B" or "C" license.
2. "Advanced", "General" or "Class B" (VEs) licensees will be authorized to test all candidates requesting a "B" or "C" license.
3. "Technician", "Novice" or "Class C" licensees will not be authorized to test.

IV. PHASING OUT RACES STATION CALL SIGNS -

We propose that all RACES Call Signs be phased out and that the existing licenses should be cancelled. Emergency stations under the RACES program shall operate using the operator's call sign when registered with a civil defense organization. No renewal or modifications of the present licenses shall be permitted.

V. TELEGRAPHY EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS-

We propose that telegraphy requirements be maintained for the "A" and "B" class licenses although reducing the required speed from 13 to 10 and from 20 to 15 words per minute.

We do not believe that the requirement should be eliminated for "convenience" reasons. Telegraphy is a very important factor in emergency communications and has been proven effective when telephony contacts are impossible. The Commission should consider Part 97.1(a) and (d). In an average emergency condition, the modern sophisticated communication equipment is not always available and telegraphy has proven an effective and reliable method to relay urgent communications, which in many cases has saved lives and property.

If CW tests were designed to prove proficiency in sending and receiving code, the "multiple choice" option in the testing procedures is not adequate. We propose that the testing procedure be modified to eliminate the "multiple choice" testing option.

VI. WRITTEN EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS -

We propose that the present examination process be maintained.

VII. ENFORCEMENT IN THE AMATEUR RADIO SERVICE -

We have noticed an improvement in the compliance enforcement aspects of Part 97. All efforts appear to be directed to interference or illegal operation practices. We propose that the Commission put more attention on the proper testing procedures and the integrity of the testing personnel. The FCC should put the

burden of proof on integrity on the VEC and not on the individual or the amateur community.

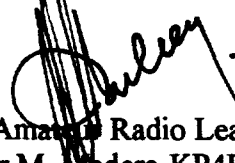
The VEC program introduced in late 1982 was an excellent replacement for the FCC conventional testing. It probably simplified the system, reduced manpower and paper processing and saved our government significant funds. As designed, it was an excellent means of maintaining a simple mechanism capable of expanding testing facilities. Today it is known to many that there are significant exceptions to the rule and in numerous instances the integrity of the sessions have been violated. The Commission should review the testing procedures to ascertain that VECs and VEs comply with the necessary procedures of honesty and integrity. We strongly believe that if the Commission implements a "random retesting" procedure (Part 97.519 (d)(1)(2)(3), most of the improper certifications will be eliminated and the integrity of the testing will be greatly improved.

We propose that:

1. All VECs improve the procedures by which VE candidates are selected.
2. The Commission makes the VECs responsible for a reliable auditing system to ensure and maintain the integrity level of VEs.
3. The VE certification process is revised to consider "VE Teams" instead of individual VEs organizing testing sessions.

4. The Commission enforces Part 97.519 (3)(d)(1), (2), and (3).
5. A formal readministration program is instituted where the Commission will, at random, pick candidates for retesting as a regular procedure.
6. VECs be prepared to have special VEs available to the FCC for retesting sessions at no expense to the FCC.
7. The Amateur Auxiliary shall not be considered as part of the enforcement efforts unless it is vested with the proper legal power. The FCC shall be totally responsible for proper compliance.

Respectfully submitted,



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